

**WAC 458-20-169 Nonprofit organizations (1) Introduction.**

Unlike most states' and the federal tax systems, Washington's tax system, specifically its business tax, applies to nonprofit organizations. Washington's business tax is imposed upon all entities that generate gross receipts or proceeds, unless there is a specific statutory exemption or deduction. This rule reviews how the business and occupation (B&O), retail sales, and use taxes apply to activities often performed by nonprofit organizations. Although some nonprofit organizations may be subject to other taxes (e.g., public utility or insurance premium taxes on income from utility or insurance activities), these taxes are not discussed in this rule. The rule describes the most common exemptions and deductions for the B&O, retail and use taxes specifically provided to nonprofit organizations by state law. Other exemptions and/or deductions not specific to nonprofit organizations may also apply.

Other rules that may be relevant to specific activities of nonprofit organizations include the following:

- (a) Artistic or cultural organizations, [WAC 458-20-249](#);
- (b) Educational institutions, school districts, student organizations, and private schools, [WAC 458-20-167](#);
- (c) Hospitals, nursing homes, and adult family homes, [WAC 458-20-168](#);
- (d) Membership organizations, nonprofit groups and clubs providing amusement, recreation, or physical fitness services, [WAC 458-20-183](#); and
- (e) Organizations holding trade shows, conventions, or seminars, [WAC 458-20-256](#).

(2) **Registration requirements.** Nonprofit organizations with \$12,000 or more per year in gross receipts from sales, and/or gross income from services subject to the B&O tax or who are required to collect or pay to the department of revenue (department) retail sales tax or any other tax or fee which the department administers (regardless of the level of annual gross receipts) must register with the department. Nonprofit organizations that have gross receipts of less than \$12,000 per year and who are not required to collect retail sales tax or any other tax or fee administered by the department are not required to register with the department.

For more details on registration requirements see [WAC 458-20-101](#) (Tax registration and tax reporting).

(3) **Filing tax returns.** Nonprofit organizations making retail sales that require the collection of the retail sales tax must file a tax return, regardless of the annual level of gross receipts or gross income and whether or not any B&O tax is due. (See also [WAC 458-20-104](#) (Small business tax relief based on volume of business).) The combined excise tax return with

payment is generally filed on a monthly basis. However, under certain conditions the department may authorize taxpayers to file and remit payment on either a quarterly or annual basis. Refer to [WAC 458-20-22801](#) for more information regarding how reporting frequencies are assigned.

Nonprofit organizations that do not have retail sales tax to remit, but are required to register, do not have to file a tax return if they meet certain statutory requirements (e.g., annual gross income of less than \$28,000) and are placed on an "active nonreporting" status by the department. Refer to [WAC 458-20-101](#) for more information regarding the "active nonreporting" status.

(4) **General tax reporting responsibilities.** While Washington state law provides some tax exemptions and deductions specifically targeted toward nonprofit organizations, these organizations otherwise have the same tax-reporting responsibilities as those of for-profit organizations.

(a) **Business and occupation tax.** [Chapter 82.04 RCW](#) imposes a B&O tax upon all persons engaged in business activities within this state, unless the income is specifically exempt or deductible under state law. The B&O tax applies to the value of products, gross proceeds of sales, or gross income of the business, as the case may be. [RCW 82.04.220](#).

(i) **Common B&O tax classifications.** [Chapter 82.04 RCW](#) provides a number of classifications that apply to specific activities. The most common B&O tax classifications that apply to income received by nonprofit organizations are the service and other activities, retailing, and wholesaling classifications. If an organization engages in more than one kind of business activity, the gross income from each activity must be reported under the appropriate tax classification.

(ii) **Measure of tax.** The most common measures of the B&O tax are "gross proceeds of sales" and "gross income of the business." [RCW 82.04.070](#) and [82.04.080](#), respectively. These measures include the value proceeding or accruing from the sale of tangible personal property or services rendered without any deduction for the cost of property sold, cost of materials used, labor costs, discounts paid, delivery costs, taxes, losses or any other expenses.

(b) **Retail sales tax.** A nonprofit organization must collect and remit retail sales tax on all retail sales, unless the sale is specifically exempt by statute. Examples of retail sales tax exemptions that commonly apply to nonprofit organizations are those for sales of certain food products (see [WAC 458-20-244](#) for more information regarding sales of food products), construction materials purchased by a health or social welfare organization for new construction of alternative housing for youth in crisis,

to be licensed as a family foster home ([RCW 82.08.02915](#)), and fund-raising activities (see subsection (5)(e) of this rule). New construction includes renovating an existing structure to provide new housing for youth in crisis.

A nonprofit organization must pay retail sales tax when it purchases goods or retail services for its own use as a consumer, unless the purchase is specifically exempt by statute. Items purchased for resale without intervening use are purchases at wholesale and are not subject to the retail sales tax. The purchaser should provide the seller with a resale certificate. (See [WAC 458-20-102](#) for information regarding resale certificates.) Organizations not required to register should indicate on the resale certificate that the group is a qualifying nonprofit organization and the items will be resold at a tax exempt nonprofit fund-raiser.

(c) **Use tax.** The use tax is imposed on every person, including nonprofit organizations, using tangible personal property within this state as a consumer, unless such use is specifically exempt by statute. The use tax applies only if retail sales tax has not previously been paid on the item. The rate of tax is the same as the sales tax rate that applies at the location where the property is first used.

A common application of the use tax occurs when items are purchased from an out-of-state seller who has no presence in Washington. Because the out-of-state seller is under no obligation to collect Washington's retail sales or use tax, the buyer is statutorily required to remit use tax directly to the department. (See also [WAC 458-20-178](#) for more information regarding the use tax.)

Except for fund-raising, exemptions from use tax generally correspond to the retail sales tax exemptions. For example, a use tax exemption for construction materials acquired by a health or social welfare organization for new construction of alternative housing for youth in crisis, to be licensed as a family foster home, [RCW 82.12.02915](#), corresponds with the retail sales tax exemption described in subsection (4)(b) above for purchasing these construction materials.

(i) **Use tax exemption for donated items.** [RCW 82.12.02595](#) provides a use tax exemption for property donated to a nonprofit charitable organization. This exemption is available for the nonprofit charitable organization, and the donor if the donor did not previously use the item as a consumer. It also applies to the use of property by a donor who is incorporating the property into a nonprofit organization's real or personal property for no charge.

The exemption also applies to another person using property originally donated to a charitable nonprofit organization that

is subsequently donated or bailed to that person by the charitable nonprofit organization, provided that person uses the property in furtherance of the charitable purpose for which the property was originally donated to the charitable nonprofit organization. For example, a hardware store donates an industrial pressure washer to a nonprofit community center for neighborhood cleanup, the community center bails this washer to people enrolled in its neighborhood improvement group for neighborhood clean-up projects. No use tax is due from any of the participants in these transactions. An example of a gift that would not qualify is when a car is donated to a church for its staff and the church gives that car to its pastor. The pastor must pay use tax on the car because it serves multiple purposes. It serves the church's charitable purpose, but it also acts as compensation to the pastor and is available for the pastor's personal use. The subsequent donation of property from the charity to another person must be solely for a charitable purpose. If the property is donated or bailed to the third party for a charitable purpose in line with the nonprofit organization's charitable activities, generally, no additional proof is required that this was the charitable purpose for which the property was originally donated.

(ii) **Use tax implications with respect to fund-raising activities.** Subsection (5)(e) below explains that a retail sales tax exemption is available for certain fund-raising sales. However, there is no comparable use tax exemption provided to the buyer/user of property purchased at these fund-raising sales. While the nonprofit organization is under no obligation to collect use tax from the buyer, the organization is encouraged to inform the buyer of the buyer's possible use tax obligation.

(5) **Exemptions.** The following sources of income are specifically exempt from tax. As such they should not be included or reported as gross income if the organization is required to file a combined excise tax return.

(a) **Adult family homes.** The B&O tax does not apply to income earned by a licensed adult family home or an adult family home exempt from licensing. [RCW 82.04.327](#).

(b) **Camp or conference centers.** [RCW 82.04.363](#) and 82.08.830 respectively provide B&O and retail sales exemptions to amounts received by a nonprofit organization from the sale or furnishing of certain items or services at a camp or conference center conducted on property exempt from the property tax under [RCW 84.36.030](#) (1), (2), or (3).

Income derived from the sale of the following items and services is exempt:

(i) Lodging, conference and meeting rooms, camping

facilities, parking, and similar licenses to use real property;

(ii) Food and meals;

(iii) Books, tapes, and other products that are available exclusively to the participants at the camp, conference, or meeting and are not available to the public at large.

The property tax exemptions are further discussed at [WAC 458-16-210](#) (Church camps), [WAC 458-16-220](#) (Nonprofit organizations or associations organized and conducted for nonsectarian purposes), and [WAC 458-16-230](#) (Character building organizations).

(c) **Child care resource and referral services.** The B&O tax does not apply to nonprofit organizations with respect to amounts received for child care resource and referral services. Child care resource and referral services do not include child care services provided directly to children. [RCW 82.04.3395](#).

(d) **Credit and debt services.** [RCW 82.04.368](#) provides a B&O tax exemption for amounts received by nonprofit organizations for providing specialized credit and debt services. These services include:

(i) Presenting individual and community credit education programs including credit and debt counseling;

(ii) Obtaining creditor cooperation allowing a debtor to repay debt in an orderly manner;

(iii) Establishing and administering negotiated repayment programs for debtors; and

(iv) Providing advice or assistance to a debtor with regard to (i), (ii), or (iii) of this subsection.

(e) **Day care provided by churches.** The B&O tax does not apply to income derived by a church for the care of children of any age for periods of less than twenty-four hours, provided the church is exempt from property tax under [RCW 84.36.020](#). [RCW 82.04.339](#).

(f) **Fund-raising.** [RCW 82.04.3651](#) provides a B&O tax exemption for amounts received from certain fund-raising activities. [RCW 82.08.02573](#) provides a comparable retail sales tax exemption.

It is important to note that these exemptions apply only to the fund-raising income received by the nonprofit organization. For example, the commission income received by a nonprofit organization selling books owned by a for-profit entity on a consignment basis is exempt of tax if the statutory requirements are satisfied. The nonprofit organization is generally responsible for collecting and remitting retail sales tax upon the gross proceeds of sales when selling items for another person (see [WAC 458-20-159](#)).

(i) **What nonprofit organizations qualify?** Nonprofit organizations that qualify for this exemption are those that

are: (A) A tax-exempt nonprofit organization described by section 501 (c)(3) (educational and charitable), (4) (social welfare), or (10) (fraternal societies operating as lodges) of the Internal Revenue Code;

(B) A nonprofit organization that would qualify for tax exemption under these codes except that it is not organized as a nonprofit corporation; or

(C) A nonprofit organization that does not pay its members, stockholders, officers, directors, or trustees any amounts from its gross income, except as payment for services rendered, does not pay more than reasonable compensation to any person for services rendered, and does not engage in a substantial amount of political activity. Political activity includes, but is not limited to, influencing legislation and participating in any campaign on behalf of any candidate for political office.

A nonprofit organization may meet (A), (B), or (C) above.

(ii) **Qualifying fund-raising activities.** For the purpose of this exemption, "fund-raising activity" means soliciting or accepting contributions of money or other property, or activities involving the anticipated exchange of goods or services for money between the soliciting organization and the organization or person solicited, for the purpose of furthering the goals of the nonprofit organization.

(A) Money raised by a nonprofit charitable group from its annual telephone fund drive to fund its homeless shelters where nothing is promised in return for a donor's pledge is exempt as fund-raising contributions of money to further the goals of the nonprofit organization.

(B) A nonprofit group organized as a community playhouse has an annual telephone fund drive. The group gives the caller a mug, jacket, dinner, or vacation trip depending on the amount of pledge made over the phone. The community playhouse does not sell or exchange the mugs, jackets, dinners or trips for cash or property, except during this pledge drive. The money is used to produce the next season's plays. The money earned from the pledges is exempt from both retail sales tax and business and occupation tax to the extent these amounts represent an exchange for goods and services for money to further the goals of the nonprofit group. The money earned from the pledges above the value of the goods and services exchanged is exempt as a fund-raising contribution of money to further the goals of the nonprofit organization.

(C) A nonprofit group sells ice cream bars at booths leased during the two-week runs of three county fairs, for a total of six weeks during the year, to fund youth camps maintained by the nonprofit group. The money earned from the booths is exempt from both retail sales tax and business and occupation tax as a fund-

raising exchange of goods for money to further the goals of the nonprofit group.

(iii) **Contributions of money or other property.** The term contributions includes grants, donations, endowments, scholarships, gifts, awards, and any other transfer of money or other property by a donor, provided the donor receives no significant goods, services, or benefits in return for making the gift. For example, an amount received by a nonprofit educational broadcaster from a group that conditions receipt upon the nonprofit broadcaster airing its seminars is not a contribution regardless of how the amount paid was titled by the two organizations.

It is not unusual for the person making a gift to require some accountability for how the gift is used as a condition for receiving the gift or future gifts. Such gifts remain exempt, provided the "accountability" required does not result in a direct benefit to the donor (examples of direct benefits to a donor are: Money given for a report on the soil contamination levels of land owned by the donor, medical services provided to the donor or the donor's family, or market research benefitting the donor directly). This "accountability" can take the form of conditions or restrictions on the use of the gift for specific charitable purposes or can take the form of written reports accounting for the use of the gift. Public acknowledgment of a donor for the gift does not result in a significant service or benefit simply because the gift is publicly acknowledged.

(iv) **Nonqualifying activities.** Fund-raising activity does not include the operation of a regular place of business in which services are provided or sales are made during regular hours such as a bookstore, thrift shop, restaurant, legal or health clinic, or similar business. It also does not include the operation of a regular place of business from which services are provided or performed during regular hours such as the provision of retail, personal, or professional services. A regular place of business and the regular hours of that business depend on the type of business being conducted.

(A) In the example demonstrating that an amount received by a nonprofit broadcaster was not a contribution because services were given in return for the funds, this activity must also be examined to see whether the exchange was for services as part of a fund-raising activity. The broadcaster was in the business of broadcasting programs. It had a regular site for broadcasting programs and ran broadcasts for 24 hours every day. Broadcasting was a part of its business activity performed from a regular place of business during regular hours. The money received from the group with the requirement that its seminars be broadcast would not qualify as money received from a fund-raising activity



even though the parties viewed the money as a "donation."

(B) A nonprofit organization that makes catalog sales throughout the year with a 24-hour telephone line for taking orders has a regular place of business at the location where the sales orders are processed and regular hours of 24 hours a day. Catalog sales are not exempt as fund-raising amounts even though the funds are raised for a nonprofit purpose.

(C) A nonprofit group organized as a community playhouse has three plays during the year at a leased theatre. The plays run for a total of six weeks and the group provides concessions at each of the performances. The playhouse has a regular place of business with regular hours for that type of business. The concessions are done at that regular place of business during regular hours. The concessions are not exempt as fund-raising activities even though amounts raised from the concessions may be used to further the nonprofit purpose of that group.

(D) A nonprofit student group, that raises money for scholarships and other educational needs, sets up an espresso stand that is open for two hours every morning during the school year. The espresso stand is a regular place of business with regular hours for that type of business. The money earned from the espresso stand is not exempt, even though the amounts are raised to further the student group's nonprofit purpose.

(v) **Fund-raising sales by libraries.** [RCW 82.04.3651](#) specifically provides that the sale of used books, used videos, used sound recording, or similar used information products in a library is not the operation of a regular place of business, if the proceeds are used to support the library. The library must be a free public library supported in whole or in part with money derived from taxes. [RCW 27.12.010](#).

(g) **Group training homes.** [RCW 82.04.385](#) provides a B&O tax exemption for amounts received from the department of social and health services for operating a nonprofit group training home. The amounts excluded from gross income must be used for the cost of care, maintenance, support, and training of developmentally disabled individuals. A nonprofit group training home is an approved nonsectarian facility equipped, supervised, managed, and operated on a full-time nonprofit basis for the full-time care, treatment, training, and maintenance of individuals with developmental disabilities.

(h) **Sheltered workshops.** [RCW 82.04.385](#) provides a B&O tax exemption for amounts received by a nonprofit organization for operating a sheltered workshop.

(i) **What is a sheltered workshop?** A sheltered workshop is that part of the nonprofit organization engaged in business activities that are performed primarily to provide evaluation and work adjusted services for a handicapped person or to



provide gainful employment or rehabilitation services to a handicapped person. The sheltered workshop can be maintained on or off the premises of the nonprofit organization.

(ii) **What is meant by "gainful employment or rehabilitation services to a handicapped person"?** Gainful employment or rehabilitation services must be an interim step in the rehabilitation process which is provided because the person cannot be readily absorbed into the competitive labor market or because employment opportunities for the person do not exist during that time in the competitive labor market.

"Handicapped," for the purposes of this exemption, means a physical or mental disability that restricts normal achievement, including medically recognized addictions and learning disabilities. However, this term does not include social or economic disadvantages that restrict normal achievement (e.g., prior criminal history or low-income status).

(i) **Student loan services.** [RCW 82.04.367](#) provides a B&O tax exemption for the gross income of nonprofit organizations that are exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code that:

(i) Are guarantee agencies under the federal guaranteed student loan program or that issue debt to provide or acquire student loans; or

(ii) Provide guarantees for student loans made through programs other than the federal guaranteed student loan program.

(6) **B&O tax deduction of government payments made to health or social welfare organizations.** [RCW 82.04.4297](#) provides a B&O tax deduction to health or social welfare organizations for amounts received from the United States, any instrumentality of the United States, the state of Washington, or any municipal corporation or political subdivision of the state of Washington as compensation for health or social welfare services. A deduction is not allowed, however, for amounts that are received under an employee benefit plan. These deductible amounts should be included in the gross income reported on the return, and then deducted on the return when determining the amount of the organization's taxable income.

(a) **What is a health or social welfare organization?** A health or social welfare organization is a nonprofit organization providing health or social welfare services that is also:

(i) A corporation sole under [chapter 24.12 RCW](#) or a not-for-profit corporation under [chapter 24.03 RCW](#). It does not include a corporation providing professional services authorized under [chapter 18.100 RCW](#);

(ii) Governed by a board of not less than eight individuals who are not paid corporate employees when the organization is a

not-for-profit corporation;

(iii) Not paying any part of its corporate income directly or indirectly to its members, stockholders, officers, directors, or trustees except as executive or officer compensation or as services rendered by the corporation in accordance with its purposes and bylaws to a member, stockholder, officer, or director or as an individual;

(iv) Only paying compensation to corporate officers and executives for actual services rendered. This compensation must be at a level comparable to like public service positions within Washington;

(v) Irrevocably dedicating its corporate assets to health or social welfare activities. Upon corporate liquidation, dissolution, or abandonment, any distribution or transfer of corporate assets may not inure directly or indirectly to the benefit of any member or individual, except for another health or social welfare organization;

(vi) Duly licensed or certified as required by law or regulation;

(vii) Using government payments to provide health or social welfare services;

(viii) Making its services available regardless of race, color, national origin, or ancestry; and

(ix) Provides access to the corporation's books and records to the department's authorized agents upon request.

(b) **Qualifying health or welfare services.** Health or social welfare services are limited exclusively to the following services:

(i) Mental health, drug, or alcoholism counseling or treatment;

(ii) Family counseling;

(iii) Health care services;

(iv) Therapeutic, diagnostic, rehabilitative or restorative services for the care of the sick, aged, physically-disabled, developmentally-disabled, or emotionally-disabled individuals;

(v) Activities, including recreational activities, intended to prevent or ameliorate juvenile delinquency or child abuse;

(vi) Care of orphans or foster children;

(vii) Day care of children;

(viii) Employment development, training, and placement;

(ix) Legal services to the indigent;

(x) Weatherization assistance or minor home repairs for low-income homeowners or renters;

(xi) Assistance to low-income homeowners and renters to offset the cost of home heating energy, through direct benefits to eligible households or to fuel vendors on behalf of eligible households; and

(xii) Community services to low-income individuals, families and groups that are designed to have a measurable and potentially major impact on the poverty in Washington.

[Statutory Authority: [RCW 82.32.300](#). 01-09-066, § 458-20-169, filed 4/16/01, effective 5/17/01; 91-21-001, § 458-20-169, filed 10/3/91, effective 11/3/91; 88-21-014 (Order 88-7), § 458-20-169, filed 10/7/88; 86-02-039 (Order ET 85-8), § 458-20-169, filed 12/31/85; 83-07-033 (Order ET 83-16), § 458-20-169, filed 3/15/83. Statutory Authority: [RCW 82.01.060](#)(2) and [82.32.300](#). 78-07-045 (Order ET 78-4), § 458-20-169, filed 6/27/78; Order ET 70-3, § 458-20-169 (Rule 169), filed 5/29/70, effective 7/1/70.]